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NEF, OR TABLE SHIP

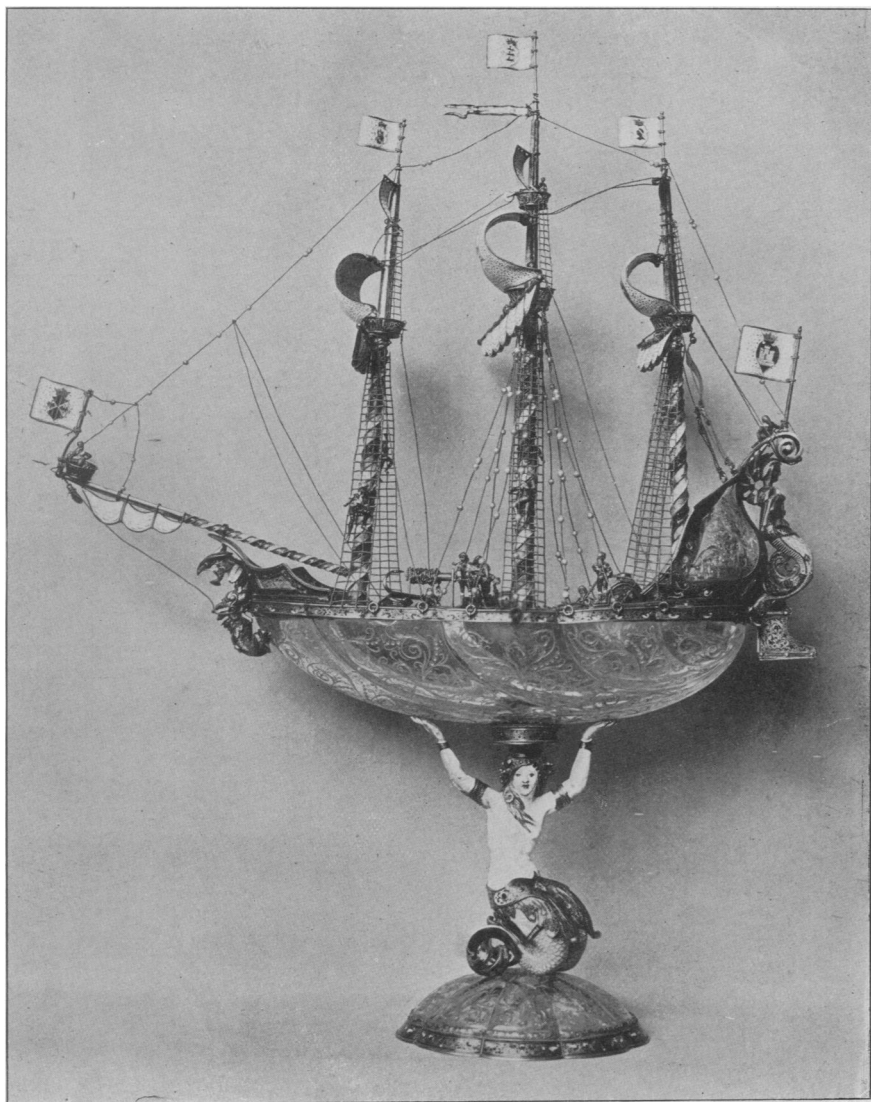
The Pennsylvania Museum has just received from Mr. William P. Henszey, of this City, a valuable gift of a crystal and silver gilt and enamel mounted ship of singular interest.

The ship's keel, forming a long bowl, is of engraved crystal, supported by a mermaid some six inches high, of enamel on metal, which rests on an oval crystal foot set in a rim of gilt metal. This rim is ornamented with a running conventional design in green and red enamel. The deck of the ship forms the lid of the bowl and is also of crystal set in an enameled silver gilt rim that matches the foot. Three enameled masts flying flags and signals of enamel, bearing heraldic devices and coats of arms, and the complete rigging of a sailing ship, rise from the deck. The cables and cords are of silver gilt strung with small pearls.

Valuable as is the gift *per se*, its special importance lies in its antiquarian interest. Such objects, often masterpieces of the jeweler's art, were used at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and probably as early as the sixteenth, by royalty or personages of high rank as part of their table appointments. They were placed on the table at meals to hold the napkin and eating implements. To own and use such a piece of goldsmithery was considered a token of nobility and they were regarded as suitable presents between persons of high rank.

The description of "the King's ship," or "nef," used about 1601-1610, given in an account of the daily life of Henry IV. of France and Marie de Medici, shows it to have been like this one of crystal and "vermeil," silver gilt. It was placed before the King in all due solemnity by the "pantler," who, bearing it in his hands, headed the procession consisting of the butler, the cup bearer and other table officers or underlings who ministered to the royal needs at meals. In her "ship" or "nef" the Queen also might place her gloves and fan. According to Mr. Battifol, in his history of Marie de Medici, the cover held in Henry IV's "ship" had been brought by him from Navarre and still bore its coat of arms.

There can be no doubt that Mr. Henszey's gift was wrought after some such royal possession. The entire ship with its stand measures twenty-six



NEF, OR TABLE SHIP
Crystal and Enamel
Gift of Mr. William P. Henszey

and a half inches. From extreme stern to end of bowsprit it measures nineteen and a half inches, and the keel is five and a half inches in width. It is a beautiful and extremely interesting addition to the collection.

All "nefs" were not made use of as above. Some were evidently only meant for table ornaments. A superb specimen recently deposited by Mme. de Stockar-Escher in the National Swiss Museum of Zurich, for instance, does not appear to have been intended as a receptacle. It represents a war galleon of silver, in parts gilt, with high raised decks, fore and aft, after the manner of the time, and flying sails and standards bearing the coat of arms of the earldom of Kybourg along with those of the Holzalb and Wolf families. It dates from about 1681. It has descended from the Bailiff of Zurich, Beat Holzalb, born 1638, who died in 1709.

While used as table ornaments these "nefs" were made with the utmost accuracy. They possessed, therefore, sufficient historic value as representing the lines and rigging of contemporary war vessels or merchantmen which "carried those dogs of an older day, who sacked the golden ports"—to warrant the Duke of Saxe Coburg Gotha and Edinburgh, as admiral of the navy, making a collection of some fifty "nefs," with which he adorned his table, disposed in squadrons, upon occasions when he entertained navy men. Since his death, King Edward VII. acquired the collection from his widow, the Duchess of Saxe Coburg Gotha.

The finest and most valuable ship in the King's fleet dates of 1650 and was made in Nuremburg. It is two feet long and represents a merchantman. The King inherited from his mother the model of the training ship *Britain* on which the present Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence received their training; and of the superb battleship *Victoria* which foundered off the coast of Syria with her crew of one hundred men and officers, as well as the admiral whose orders caused the disaster. These, of course, do not belong to the same category as the specimens mentioned above and are merely models. King Edward occasionally uses his antique fleet, as did his brother, as table decoration.

Antique "nefs" are so rare that few, even of the great European museums, possess examples.

S. Y. S.



OLD MEXICAN GLASS

The early Spanish chroniclers of Mexico make frequent allusions to the manufacture of glass in that country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, according to Juan N. Del Valle, Puebla had become a beautiful city, and "the native talent of her sons for the useful arts was revealed each day more and more, * * * in pottery and glassware and in many other handicrafts which in those times might well sustain a comparison with the products of Europe."

Thomas Gage, writing in 1648 (*A New Survey of the Indies*, London), states that in Puebla "there is likewise a Glass house, which is there a rarity, none other being as yet known in those parts."